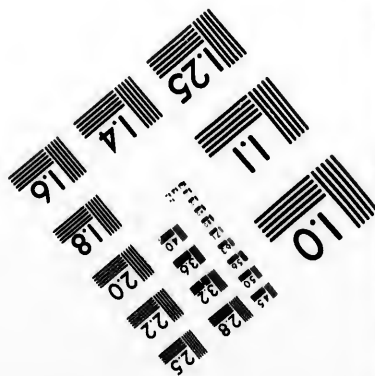
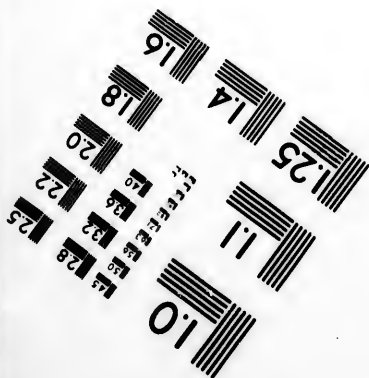
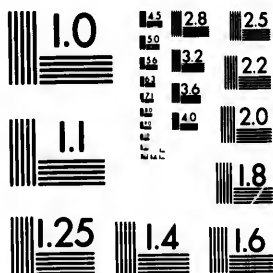


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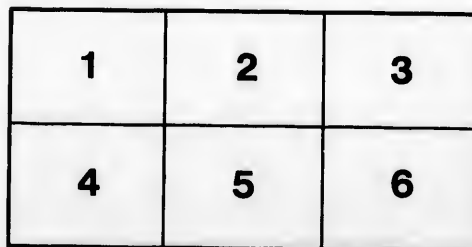
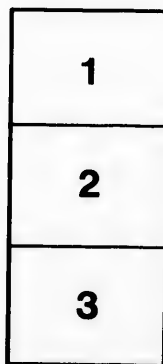
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Pam. Doudiet, Chas. A.

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# Funeral Sermon

OF THE LATE

**JOHN MELVILLE,**

LOCOMOTIVE DEPARTMENT OF G. T. R.; FOR MANY YEARS

A MEMBER OF ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH, POINT

ST. CHARLES,

PREACHED IN ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH,

ON

SUNDAY, 24<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1874,

BY REV. CHAS. A. DOUDIET.



MONTREAL:

“WITNESS” PRINTING HOUSE.

1874.

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## SERMON.

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NOTE.—The late John Mcville was killed on the 14th of June whilst returning to his work in the Grand Trunk Railway shops. He was standing on one of the many tracks that cross the Lachine Road at Point St. Charles, when a locomotive coming up behind him threw him down, and mangled his limbs so fearfully that he survived only about an hour. He was calm in the midst of his sufferings; addressed a few words of comfort to his wife and children, and, having joined in prayer with the minister of his Church, peacefully expired.

“ *Our friend . . . sleepeth.*”—John xi., ii.

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DEAR BRETHREN,

The hand of the Lord is heavy upon us. There is a vacant seat before me to-day which last Sabbath was occupied. One who for a time was an Elder of this church, and at all times its true friend, hath fallen asleep in Jesus. A voice that often joined with ours on earth to sing the praises of the Lord, will be heard here no more. A fellow pilgrim through the world's wilderness has passed from our sight. We have laid his body in its last resting place,—dust to dust, ashes to ashes,—and now, a last public duty is ours, a duty at all times delicate and difficult; one, indeed, to which there is but ONE that ever proved himself equal the duty of comforting the mourner and interpreting Providence. Who is sufficient for these things? Praying, therefore, that the Spirit of Christ might guide us in the performance of this, our arduous task, we have turned to the sweet and simple story related in the eleventh chapter of John, and in the three words of Jesus, that form our text, we have thought that much could be found to comfort and to cheer; much to help us to say with true resignation and faith: “Father, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.”

“Our friend sleepeth,” says Jesus to his disciples, who with himself had often shared the welcome and hospitality of the family of Bethany. There He spoke from a divine point of view. To God there is no death. His creatures do not pass from his sight when they disappear from before our eyes. “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from Thy presence ; if I ascend up into heaven Thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there ; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.” All live to God ; He is not a God of the dead, but of the living. The disciples understood not at first the deep meaning hidden in these words of Jesus, “Our friend sleepeth.” Let us not blame them, for with all the knowledge of life and immortality revealed in the Gospel, when God recalls our friends, how hard it often is to dismiss the despairing thought that they are lost to us for ever, and to remember that they only sleep, and that “God will bring again with him them that sleep in Jesus.” Christ did not reprove his disciples then for their slowness of understanding, but, remembering their infirmities, he accommodated his language to their imperfect ideas, and told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.” Yet not long after, when speaking to Martha, he utters this sublime and profound declaration : “He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

This brings us back to our assertion that there is really *no death*, if death simply means cessation of existence. There is a very great change in the conditions of life ; there is the casting-off of a “tabernacle of clay,” often accompanied with pain and agony ; but through all, the living principle remains unimpaired. Whilst the soul of the believer ascends up to God to enter into rest, the mortal frame, which here was its dwelling, is also at



rest, peacefully sleeping until the great resurrection day. Even this last lowly resting place is blessed and hallowed for Christ's disciples, for he sanctified it when, for three days, his body slept therein.

It is because soul and body rest, that Jesus calls death a sleep. Sleep is rest: rest from labor, pain, toil and grief; and the sleep of the tomb is, moreover, rest from passion, sin and temptation. The hard battle of flesh and spirit is over; Satan defeated has fled, and ere the day of triumph is celebrated in the view of the whole universe, the Christian warrior sleepeth. "The wicked " have ceased from troubling, the weary are at rest."

Our friend is taking this rest. No weariness can ever more be his. None of the aches and pains of this life can ever awaken him out of his sleep. Doubts and fears can never more disturb his peace. The chains of sin are broken, the prison-house of matter has crumbled to ruin, and another victory over the great enemy of mankind has been gained through the blood of the Lamb; another "brand has been plucked from the burning;" another earthly traveller has passed through the gates of pearl.

"Our friend sleepeth." This sleep is not forever. We sleep, and wake again. Unconscious of the flight of time the sleeper awakens as the dawn ushers in another day, and it seems but a moment from the evening when he laid himself down exhausted, to the morning when he rises refreshed. A nobler morning will dawn for every follower of Christ,—a morning without clouds, and then even the inert and decayed body will rise from its narrow bed. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with " a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the " trump of God, and "he dead in Christ shall rise."

When the body is asleep the mind does not necessarily share in that state of unconsciousness. The existence of dreams proves this, in a partial degree, at least. We only remember, and even then indistinctly, the dreams

that immediately precede our awakening. It would, therefore, be impossible to prove that, at any time, the soul has been asleep. But even if this was asserted, the Word of God, in speaking of death as of a sleep, only speaks of the perishable body, lying motionless and unconscious in the bosom of the earth. This important truth is proved by the inspired words of Paul in 2. Cor., v. 6.: "Therefore, we are always confident, knowing " that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent " from the Lord (for we walk by faith, and not by sight); " we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent " from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

After the resurrection, the soul will be no longer " absent from the body;" therefore, if, as the Apostle says, Christians are " present with the Lord" *before* the resurrection, whilst yet " absent from the body," we are taught to believe that immediately after death the souls of followers of Christ are enjoying a conscious existence in the presence of the Lord of life. Nor does this important doctrine rest upon one single text of Scripture. We read elsewhere that Paul " was in a strait betwixt " two, having a desire to be with Christ, which is far " better." Can it be claimed that the Apostle meant that to spend thousands of years in unconscious sleep was better for him, and not rather that from the moment his eyes closed to this worldly scene his soul would stand in the presence of his loved Lord? Dr. Watts, commenting upon this passage, says: " It is evident that the Apostle " hoped to be present with the Lord immediately, as soon " as he was ' absent from the body;' otherwise, death " would have been to him of little gain, if he must have " been sleeping till the dead shall rise at the general " resurrection." Stephen, falling under the murderous missiles of his Jewish persecutors, " looked up and saw " the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand " of God," and as he felt his soul departing he called upon his Saviour saying: " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Evidently his conviction was that at this very time, and not thousands of years hence, his soul would be with God. Likewise, when Jesus was dying on the cross, he did not say to the penitent thief who called upon him to "remember him," "Thou shalt be with Me in heaven after the resurrection," but "*to-day* thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Therefore, we firmly hold that whilst the body is consigned to a long, dreamless sleep in the grave, the soul immediately enters an active and vigorous life. And if this is so, what human heart can conceive the bliss, the delight, the rapture of the disciple of Christ as he exchanges, in a moment, the pains and sorrows of earthly life for the peace and joy of the Father's House above, and finds himself ushered by angels into the presence of Him "whom not having seen he loved!"

O beatific sight!  
 "O vision, with which nothing can compare!  
 O blessed look! how brief  
 "I know not; but eternity itself  
 "Will never from my soul erase the lines  
 "Of that serene, transfiguring aspect.  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 "He raised me tenderly, saying 'My child,'  
 "And I, like Thomas on that sacred eve,  
 "Could only answer Him, 'My Lord, My God!'"

—Bickersteth.

Some have thought that the souls of men, instead of being consigned at once to heaven or to hell, await the day of judgment in a middle state, happy or wretched, according as they are of the saved or the lost. We find, however, no warrant in Scripture for such an opinion. If the soul of the Christian at death is, as the Apostle says, "with Christ," it is in heaven; for where Christ is, there also is heaven. Jesus ever standeth at God's right hand making intercession for us. Therefore if the soul is with Christ, it is also before the throne of the Father, in the highest heaven. This is further confirmed by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. They die: one

is found "in hell grievously tormented," and the other "comforted, in Abraham's bosom."

Seeing, then, that death is not an unconscious sleep of the soul, that it is neither the suspension nor the extinction of our being, we derive an immense consolation from the fact that whilst "our friend sleepeth," his glorified spirit is with Christ. This doctrine teaches us not to let our thoughts linger too much about the grave, where his mortal remains await the coming of the Lord. True, as the very dust of Zion was dear to the captive Israelite, thus even the dust of our dear departed is precious; but a day cometh when by the mighty power that raised Christ from the dead, God shall speak to those frail and fast decaying fragments of humanity, and they that hear shall live. Yet, if our loved and lost were allowed to speak to us from heaven, this is what they would say: "Weep not for us, but for yourselves. Our troubles are over, our conflict is ended, our temptations are past, our burden is gone, our crown is won. Weep for yourselves, for yours is still the cross, yours the trials, yours the afflictions, yours the tears."

But the body of our friend sleepeth, and this palpable, material, visible fact, being too apt to take the first place in our thoughts, we come back to the strange, yet not the less true assertion, that this sleep is not forever. For Jesus himself has said: "The hour cometh.....when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live"—and also, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." The victory of Christ over Satan would not be complete if this was not so. The evil one could still boast that he had marred the beauty of God's master-piece of creation; that part of his destructive mischief was irremediable; and that, although defeated in his attempts against the souls of God's elect, he had triumphed in the utter ruin of their bodies. But the Word of God declares

that the enemy of man will not even have this poor consolation. Not a hair of the head of God's people falls without his express permission, and not a single trophy of victory will be taken by Satan when he is consigned to his everlasting doom.

To explain how this universal restoration of bodies, whose organisms have been in some cases scattered to the four winds of heaven, will take place, may exceed our powers of understanding, but believing that "with God all things are possible," and that nothing can be too hard for One who created worlds out of nothingness by a mere effort of His will, we bow reverently before His mighty word and say: "The Lord hath spoken, shall he not also do it?"

And that hour cometh when it will be done. It is not a mere man who thus prophesies, it is the Son of God, it is God himself. He said of his friend Lazarus, "he sleepeth;" but he also said, "the hour cometh when those that sleep shall awaken and rise." He proved his right to prophesy thus, when, by a word, he brought back life to the ruler's little daughter who had just died—to the son of the widow of Nain, who was about to be buried—and to Lazarus, who had been four days in the tomb. He proved it still further when He rose Himself from the grave, and so important did early Christians deem this last proof of the Saviour's power that one of them says: "If Christ is not risen, your faith is vain, and you are yet in your sins."

Our friends that sleep hear not our voices, they give no answer to our lamentations over them; but at the voice of the Son of God, at the sound of the trump of God, earth shall give back its dead, and they shall live. Not to begin a new existence, mixed up with pain and sorrow, with trouble and sin, like this present life; the friends of Jesus will rise to reign with Him, His triumph, their triumph, His life, their life. They shall be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air," and shall ever be with

Him. Before the assembled multitudes who lived and died since the creation of this world, before angels and archangels, they will be declared "blessed of the Father," and the heirs of the "kingdom prepared for them from "the foundation of the world."

Oh! who can describe the ecstasy of that glorious resurrection, who can paint the joy of seeing once again, resplendent in glorious life and beauty, the incorruptible bodies of those we knew and loved; of marking with eager rapture the marvellous change in the features of dear faces that we last watched when clouded by the grey shadows of death, of meeting once more the glance of bright loving eyes that we have seen growing dim in the pangs of approaching dissolution. What eternity of bliss in the renewed embrace of arms and the hearty clasp of hands which we mournfully crossed, rigid and cold over the icy bosom. For all this is necessarily included in the words, "God shall bring again with Him them that sleep in Jesus." Many a Naomi shall find again her Elimelech. Many an Isaac, his Rebecca. Many a David, the little child that loving arms tenderly raised from its cradle to lay it in its bier. "Eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, nor has it ever come up into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him."

With such hopes before us why should we mourn, although "Our brother sleepeth." To quote the words of a distinguished French author, "When the green grass "of another June waves *over* us, when the soft summer "wind of another June sighs through the green leaves, "when the sunshine of some more genial day shall cheer- "fully brighten the stone that may bear our name and "yours, what better can we wish, that if we leave be- "hind us those who may sometimes visit the quiet spot "where we are laid, they may be able to say humbly and "hopefully," what we now say of our departed brother, "Surely *here* at last, and surely *there*, in a better place,

“ the weary heart and hand are still, yea surely, God  
 “ hath given His beloved sleep.”

When our friends fall asleep in Jesus, we do not usually, in the first bitterness of our grief, take in all the consolations disclosed to us by faith. Even those who, in times of prosperity, thought that nothing could ever shake their trust in God, find themselves as broken reeds, prostrated by the furious blast of sorrow. A question, fraught with rebellion against Almighty God, comes, times and again, to disturb the already distracted mind: Why hath the Lord done this?—a question often unanswerable. God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. Darkness is round about him. Clouds are the habitation of His throne. Mystery attends His footsteps. But even where the cause of God's afflictive providence towards us, is unknown, would it not be wiser to ask, not: Why hath God done this? but: Why hath He done only this? Instead, the soul questions the justice or the wisdom of the blow. Like Asaph in the 73rd psalm, it says, “ The ungodly prosper in the world, but all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain.” Is it strange that for such souls, dark clouds entirely hide the glorious light which ought constantly to shine upon the Christian's path? Ah! brethren, if there was no resurrection, if, when our friends fall asleep, there was never to be an awakening, then indeed we might weep over the ill-fortune of those who only enjoyed the world for a very brief season, and have now lost its enjoyments forever; we might weep to think that those who possessed the treasures of our love, must now forever remain unconscious of our accents of despair. Then, indeed, to every plan for the future, to every thought of coming hope, the memories of lost ones would be mixed, and to every word of comfort and cheer, would be opposed the conviction of despairing hearts, crying, “ They will return no more.” And in the hopeless grief of unbelievers

we see the consequences of such blind and sinful repinings, in the existence of hearts crushed down by their weight of grief, in lives that have of life but the name, for the mourner's heart is laid in the grave with the ones that are lost. Such men bitterly question the wisdom and mercy of the Creator; they complain that life is aimless and empty. They say, "Why hath God endowed us with powers of affection, only to make them instruments of torture to our poor hearts?" And they weep long, long after vacant seats round the hearth have been filled by others, and even when succeeding years have furrowed the brow and whitened the hair, the sight of some familiar object, the stray sound of a voice, an accidental resemblance, awaken storms of emotion.

"And then the feelings hid for years  
Break forth at length in burning tears."

But, oh, believers, Jesus who said to the lone widow of Nain, "Weep not," repeats this to you. Not that he condemns the natural expression of our grief, for He Himself wept; but the sinful excess of sorrow, only justifiable in them that have no hope. The riddles that puzzle unbelief are not mysteries for our most holy faith. An answer is given to every question of our doubting hearts. Some ask: "Why were our friends called 'before us?'" God's Word teaches in answer that it was because their work on earth was done. When our appointed task is ended we also shall enter into rest. Or, if we ask: "Why was the silver cord of our affection broken?" the answer is; "Is it, indeed, broken? Faith will pass away; hope be replaced by sight, but love never dies. Human ties between disciples of Christ shall be drawn closer; the sleep of the grave cannot destroy them." If it be sweet to think that our souls were bound on earth to those of our sainted dead, how much sweeter still to know that in entering heaven they have helped to lift up our affections there; that part



of our better self dwells already with them in the Heavenly Mansions.

Even on the rugged thorns of life a God of love hath scattered white blossoms, even along the desert path He hath planted grateful shades; even in the wilderness He hath caused living springs to flow. Blessed are those who through faith can avail themselves of these divine comforts. "As their days their strength shall be." They may, like the bush which Moses saw near Horeb, be surrounded with the fiery flames of affliction, and yet be not consumed.

"Our brother sleepeth," and thanks be to God that we can add "He sleepeth in Jesus." There are many who, in the hour of death, call on God for mercy, who, during life and health, lived only for the world; when they are gone we can say but little to comfort the friends they have left behind. But this is not the case here. For many years a member of the Church, our friend, in a quiet and unassuming way, strove to fulfil his duties to God and man. It is not long since he stood with us before the Lord's Table, and for the last time on earth recalled in the sacred symbols his Saviour's dying love. He did not wait for the hour of death to seek reconciliation to God. He sought the Lord in days of health and prosperity, and, therefore, when all unexpectedly he was summoned to appear before His awful throne, he was found "clothed, and not naked." He fell where we all should fall when our appointed time comes, in the way of duty, and through all his dying agonies the hand of God upheld him, keeping his mind unclouded to the last. A loving husband, a kind father, a faithful friend, he leaves behind him the unsullied reputation that should bear witness to the reality of the faith of every Christian, and now, although dead, he yet speaketh. The suddenness of his call repeats to every one of us the Saviour's warning: "Watch, for ye know not the day nor the

“hour in which the Son of man cometh.” Whilst life is calm and prosperous, and all around us is peaceful, profit of the time to rear upon Christ, the Rock, a spiritual building that may withstand the storm and the flood. It is not time to build when the tempest is raging. Sailing upon the sea of life, it will not do to wait to secure the masts until the hurricane bursts above our heads. It is not time to dig wells when a conflagration consumes our dwellings; neither is it time to think of salvation *only* when the soul is fast departing.

Our brother's death repeats to us that it is a great thing to be a Christian, that the peace of God is, indeed, a pearl of great price that worlds could not purchase, and yet given freely to him that believeth. With that peerless jewel in our possession the soul remains tranquil, even when storms heap up their threatening clouds overhead, even when sorrow, sickness and death invade our homes. With that precious peace, even though the angel of death should stand at our own bedside, we can keep our eyes fastened upon the Lord of glory and forget all but His love.

“Our brother sleepeth.” There is a gap in the ranks of Christ's defenders in this congregation. Brethren, who will fill this gap? Who of you all, dear hearers, that until now has hesitated to profess openly his love for Christ, will take warning and consecrate himself for time and eternity to his Redeemer? And above all, we pray that this bitter affliction may be sanctified to our brother's nearest and dearest, so that in the day of Christ they all may stand together at God's right hand, a united family in heaven. Jesus once said of the blessed dead that they shall be like the angels in heaven, and also that “there is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” From this we would infer that our friends in heaven may share in this “angels' joy,” and though on earth we cannot do anything else to give them joy, or add to their pleasures, yet it may be that by a sin-

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cere repentance and turning to God we furnish them with a new subject of praise, and, therefore, of enjoyment. Let this additional inducement to love Jesus have due weight with every one who has a friend in heaven, and as of ourselves we are powerless for good, let us have recourse to the Source of all wisdom and power to be helped in our need.

Sleeping brother, here we bid thee farewell. Rest in thy Saviour's arms until the great resurrection day, and when our appointed hour is come, may we meet with thee again under the ever-green shades of the tree of life; together may we tread the golden streets and drink of the waters of the pure crystal stream that flows from the throne of God. Short is the time, and then our eyes shall behold the King in His glory, earth's woes and tears all forgotten. With His own "pierced hand of love" Christ shall wipe away every tear."

"And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,  
"And death itself shall die."



